



Managing a Difficult Conversation with a Member

These conversations can be tricky and can help us remove obstacles that may be standing in the way of development to allow and drive a culture of continuous improvement. Having this conversation will show our member(s) how much we care about their progress and how much we value growing and nurturing the talent we have within the organization.

There are benefits of having challenging conversations when dealing with a difficult member. Most of us still find the thought of it being uncomfortable and would prefer to avoid the issue with the hope it will go away. These next few steps will help with managing a conversation with a difficult member.

Prepare

State Intent

Tell Your Side

Listen to Their Side

Manage Reactions

Find Solution and Agree



1. Prepare

- a. It is discovered that one of the key factors preventing us from having a challenging conversation is that we don't know how to start. If we take time in advance to think about what we really want out of a conversation, we can use this as our anchor to stay focused. More often than not when we end up in a difficult or emotionally charged conversation, we can find ourselves moving away from dialogue and into a debate where we are just trying to "win" the argument. Remember to step out of our own heads and remember what WE want out of it and think about what the best outcome is.

2. State Intent

- a. Don't beat around the bush! Maintain focus and state the issue that needs to be discussed. This should not be how you are feeling or an emotional 'rant'. Consider how you might express the intent of the conversation beforehand.

Examples

- i. "I'd like to have a performance conversation with you"
- ii. "Let's get together to talk through your recent progress/performance"
- iii. "Hey, we seem to be having a disconnect. Can we talk?"

3. Tell Your Side

- a. Communicate with generosity, respect, integrity, and facts/truth. It's more important to tell your whole story. Put your message out there so you can listen to their response. It's important to cover all of the facts: how you feel about it and the bigger picture effect it has. This is more important when the receiver doesn't care much for the relationship but will care more if repercussions elsewhere.

4. Listen to Their Side

- a. Sometimes it can be a hard task to get the other person to open up. It is important to consider how they feel. It is also not about making assumptions and guessing how they feel. Our inner thoughts and dialogue can hinder listening to others. You need to appreciate and respect that their story may differ from your own. LISTEN to the other person's perspective without interrupting.



5. Manage Reactions

- a. Having uncomfortable conversations is never easy, but if we feel confident that we know how to deal with emotional reactions, we will not need to feel threatened by the prospect of having a challenging conversation in the future.
 - i. Avoidance
 1. Let's bring it back to the issue at hand. We need to acknowledge what's happening.
 - ii. Blame
 1. I understand that there may be other people involved but right now I'd like to keep this focused on you and I.
 - iii. Silence
 1. It is important we talk about this. It's serious. Let's try and reflect on what's happened. I want to hear your view and how we can move forward. I don't have all the answers.
 - iv. Anger
 1. Can we try to explore and understand the reasons why you are so angry? It seems as if you are really angry and can't work with me, let's talk about that
 - v. Crying
 1. Let's take a moment before we continue.

6. Find Solutions and Agree

- a. When we are in an emotionally charged situation it is very easy for us to lose focus and come away with no conclusion, which can ultimately make the situation even worse. It is vital to move on to positive steps to address the situation. As far as possible, this stage needs to involve give and take. Both sides may need to adjust their previously held assumptions and accept a degree of compromise.